



For Immediate Release
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LDF Issues Statement on Rising Threats Against School Boards, Educators

In response to the disturbing and increased targeting of school officials, including incidents of harassment and threats of violence against school board members and school staff in connection with anti-truth and anti-masking propaganda, Janai Nelson, Associate Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), issued the following statement in support of a recent request from the National School Board Association (NSBA), on behalf of its 90,000 members, asking for urgent support from the federal government:

“What we have witnessed in the past several weeks — school board meetings overtaken by people threatening violence in order to silence discussions about race in the classroom as well as intimidate public officials into eliminating school mask mandates — has been deeply troubling and increasingly dangerous.

“The rise of the disturbing tactics which the NSBA warns target its members in several states across the nation signifies a disturbing and growing effort to prevent public officials from protecting student health as our country continues to face a pandemic crisis, and educators from discussing the lived experiences of generations of Americans. School boards, administrators, and educators cannot and should not be expected to contend with these dangerous attacks on their own.

“For much of its history, LDF has represented protesters engaged in the exercise of their First Amendment rights, and we continue to do so around the country. But we reject attempts to frame these school board and school protests as First Amendment protected speech of concerned parents. To the extent that those threatening public officials and their families are in fact parents with children in those school districts, their right to free speech does not include targeted threats against school board members or teachers. In fact, these protesters have more in common with the threatening violent mobs who blocked entrances, menaced children, and assaulted reporters outside schools where Black children were attempting to exercise their right to attend integrated schools in the years after *Brown v. Board of Education*.

“That teachers and duly elected school members must endure threats to their safety and that of their families because of the implementation of public health protocols designed to protect children, or because they seek to teach the truth of American racism with historical accuracy, is antithetical to democratic discourse and engagement. The U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education are not only empowered but are, in our view, obligated to respond to the request for protection and support from educators and elected school board members who rightly fear the escalation of these threats of violence and intimidation.

“To that end, we are encouraged by Attorney General Merrick Garland’s announcement on Monday that he has directed the Federal Bureau of Investigation to work with U.S.

Attorneys and local leaders to identify strategies to address this urgent threat, as well as his promise to announce further measures in the coming days. We are gratified that the Justice Department is committed to bringing its considerable authority and resources to bear to defend public school officials from heinous threats of malice and physical violence. These are helpful first steps.

“The Department of Education must now take a lead role itself in advancing the Biden administration’s stated goal of building equitable environments in our schools. This is imperative to ensure that all students have a full, fair, and quality education that reflects the truthful history of America. We call on the Department of Education to recommit to its work to advance equity through inclusive curricula and to support school boards and administrators who are choosing to do so as well.

“We stand firmly with the school officials across the country who are continuing to show up courageously during this pandemic and amid the deterioration of public discourse into physical threats and violence. It is imperative that America’s schools are protected from becoming battlegrounds.”

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).